

September 25, 1968

Mr. Marvin E. Wolfgang
Chairman, Dept. Sociology
Center for Studies in Criminology
and Criminal Law, Univ. Penna.
4025 Chestnut St.,
Phila., Pa. 19104

Dear Mr. Wolfgang,

Your September 22 answer to my letter of September 2 fascinates me.

"The cautions you suggested are indeed appropriate", you say, and "The work of our task force on Assassinations and Political Violence will reflect your concerns, I believe. Most of that work is historical and no effort was made to reopen the Oswald case. We addressed ourselves to broader issues".

Certainly the most important assassination was that of the President. How can this be addressed "historically" or with the "broader issues"?

What good is all the theorizing, all the invocation of history, if it is not appropriate? How can you draw conclusions without certain knowledge of the cause and the criminal?

In fact, how can you avoid an awful political and historical crime, retailing or supporting (if only by tacit acceptance or silence) fiction or falsehood, when the issue is so central to the purpose of your work and so vital to the integrity of our society?

I am entirely at a loss to understand how your obligations or your intellects permit you to say anything about the Presidential assassination divorced from any consideration of who the assassin or assassins were and why the deed was done.

And how can you assess the violence in the wake of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., without addressing what caused it, this murder, and then asking yourself whether it could have been one of the purposes of that particular crime?

Fairies and needles remain too popular with scholars.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg